

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 NEA-10 IGA-02

IO-13 L-03 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

SP-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /132 W

-----067868 171600Z /44

P R 171154Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0433

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FOR AMBASSADOR G. EDWARD CLARK FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID SREF BC

SUBJECT: REFUGEE ASSESSMENT

REF: STATE 183153

1. WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR ARRIVAL AUGUST 19 AND OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS AND ASSESS REFUGEE PROBLEM HERE. AS PART OF PREPARATION FOR YOUR VISIT, I HAVE ASKED THAT PERTINENT BACKGROUND BE PREPARED ON GOB POLICIES AND ATTITUDES. TO GIVE YOU OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT AT GREATER LENGTH ON THIS ISSUE, I AM CABLING THIS STATEMENT FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

2. BACKGROUND: GOB PROVIDES TEMPORARY EMERGENCY RELIEF TO REFUGEES BECAUSE (A) BOTSWANA IS A FRONTLINE STATE COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST HER MINORITY-RULED NEIGHBORS, AND (B) THE DAILY FLOW OF RHODESIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES THROUGH BOTSWANA'S POROUS NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN BORDERS COULD NOT BE STEMMED EVEN IF THE GOVERNMENT WISHED TO DO SO. MOREOVER, EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES IS HUMANITARIAN MEASURE CONSISTENT WITH BOTSWANA'S
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DEMOCRATIC, NON-RACIAL INTERNAL ORDER. FOR ASSISTANCE IN CARRYING OUT THIS RELIEF EFFORT, THE GOVERNMENT HAS REPEATEDLY REQUESTED FOREIGN AID DONORS TO CONTRIBUTE TO FUNDING OF FARAH REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND OTHER EMERGENCY RELIEF MEASURES.

3. BECAUSE GOB OFFICIALS PERCEIVE THAT PRESENCE OF

REFUGEES HAS ADVERSE IMPACT ON BOTSWANA'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PRODUCES SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRAINS, THERE ARE IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS ON DEGREE OF REFUGEE ASSISTANCE BOTSWANA IS ABLE AND WILLING TO PROVIDE. THEREFORE, BOTSWANA'S REFUGEE RELIEF PROGRAM FOR THE MOMENT DOES NOT GO MUCH BEYOND PROVIDING REFUGEES WITH SAFE HAVEN AND MINIMAL LIFE SUPPORT WHILE THEY ARE IN TRANSIT TO MORE PERMANENT ARRANGEMENTS IN THIRD COUNTRIES. TO DATE, GOB HAS NOT PERMITTED RESETTLEMENT OF LARGE NUMBERS OF RHODESIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA BECAUSE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR PERMANENT PRESENCE IN BOTSWANA COULD CREATE EVEN MORE DISSENT AMONG A CITIZENRY LONG SINCE DISENCHANTED WITH REFUGEES. MOREOVER, GOB FEARS THAT CIVIL WAR AMONG NATIONALIST FACTIONS IN RHODESIA OR FURTHER DETERIORATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN INTERNAL SITUATION COULD RESULT IN WAVES OF REFUGEES WHICH WOULD THREATEN BOTSWANA'S STABILITY, POLITICALLY AS WELL AS ECONOMICALLY. UNDERSTANDABLY, GOB LEASERS ARE RELUCTANT TO UNDERTAKE LARGE-SCALE, LONG-RANGE PROGRAMS WHICH COULD TEND TO ATTRACT EVEN MORE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE, FRUSTRATED, AND POSSIBLY ARMED REFUGEES TO BOTSWANA. HOWEVER, THE GOB HAS DECIDED TO ACT, WITH OUR ASSISTANCE, IN TWO MAJOR AREAS: (A) BUILDING OF TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AND (B) UNIVERSITY HOSTEL. AN ESTIMATED HAL OF 960 PLACES IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR REFUGEES. (FOR REASONS OF GOB POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES, THESE TWO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SCHOOLS SHOULD NOT BE REFERRED TO AS "REFUGEE SCHOOLS".) THE GOB HAS AGREED TO ADMIT 50 REFUGEES TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA; THE HOSTEL IS EXPECTED TO ACCOMMODATE 70, OF WHICH U.S. HAS EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 15. REGRETTABLY, IN THESE TWO MAJOR AREAS OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, OUR CONTRIBUTION IS BEING HELD UP ON PROCEDURAL GROUNDS IN AID/W, THE LATEST BEING A REQUIRMENT TO PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT. THE LATTER IS DIFFICULT REQUIREMENT TO FULFILL SINCE GOB HAS NOT YET SELECTED THE LOCATION OF THE SCHOOLS; MEANWHILE THE REFUGEE STUDENTS FROM SOWETO ARE, TO PUT IT MILDLY, CREATING SOMETHING OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD IN GABORONE AND ADDING TO THE DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS OF SQUATTERS ON OUTSKIRTS OF BABORONE.

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BRM CURRENT THINKING. IN VIEW OF GOB POLICY AND ATTITUDES OUTLINED ABOVE, WE BELIEVE YOUR TEAM WILL FIND GOB ATTENTIVE TO PROJECT PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD HELP PROVIDE TEMPORARY EMERGENCY RELIEF TO REFUGEES, THUS MINIMIZING ADVERSE IMPACT ON BOTSWANA'S OWN DEVELOPMENT. IN DISCUSSING SUCH POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE, YOU MAY WISH TO KEEP IN MIND THAT, DESPITE REPEATED EFFORTS, WE HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING BILATERAL ASSISTANCE UP TO NOW AND GOB OFFICIALS MAY BE UNDERSTANDABLY SKEPTICAL. THEY ARE AWARE THAT, IN THE INTEREST OF BEING RESPONSIVE, WE HAVE AGREED UP TO NOW TO CHANNEL OUR AID THROUGH UNHCR, ESPECIALLY WHERE IMMEDIATE RELIEF WAS NECESSARY. YOU MAY RECALL THAT OTHER DONORS ARE GIVING BILATERAL AID (AND GETTING CREDIT FOR IT). HOWEVER, WE ARE NOW COMMITTED TO A MULTILATERAL APPROACH THROUGH UNHCR AND (AS NOTED ABOVE) WE HAVE HOPES OF FOLLOWING THROUGH SHORTLY WITH SIGNIFICANT, INDEED VITAL, CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION. IN ADDITION, MULTILATERAL ASSISTANCE HAS SOME ADVANTAGES, I.E., IT FACILITATES INTEGRATION OF U.S. EFFORT WITH THAT OF OTHER DONORS; IT AVOIDS APPEARANCE OF U.S. POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT IN REFUGEE AFFAIRS AND DEPOLITICIZES OUR ASSISTANCE WITH CONSEQUENT ABSENCE OF DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY.

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5. AMONG POSSIBLE FUTURE PROJECTS (BUILDING ON EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ALREADY NOTED) ARE THE FOLLOWING:

A. LEADERSHIP - FUNDING TO AUGMENT DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS' STAFFS WITH TRAINED PERSONNEL TO RUN REFUGEE RELIEF EFFORT.

B. MEDICAL - IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL FACILITIES IN

AREAS SUCH AS FRANCISTOWN, WHERE PRESENCE OF REFUGEES OVERBURDENS EXISTING RESOURCES, OR CONTRACT MEDICAL TEAMS FOR RELIEF/TRANSIT CAMPS.

C. SCHOLARSHIPS - FUNDING OF ADDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS IN THIRD COUNTRIES FOR SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEE STUDENTS.

D. CONSTRUCTION OF WAREHOUSES FOR STORAGE OF EMERGENCY RELIEF SUPPLIES (IN COORDINATION WITH OTHER POTENTIAL DONORS).

E. PRELIMINARY PREPARATION OF SITES FOR NEW TRANSIT CAMPS.

6. LONG-RANGE PROGRAMS. GOB WOULD ALSO BE INTERESTED, WE BELIEVE, IN BILATERAL, LONGER-RANGE PROJECTS THAT WOULD ADVANCE BOTSWANA'S DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS FACILITATE REFUGEE HANDLING. TO GOB IS MOVING RAPIDLY (WITH OTHER DONORS' HELP) IN THESE AREAS. ANY U.S. CONTRIBUTION WILL HAVE TO BE FAIRLY PROMPT IF IT IS TO BE RELEVANT. SUCH PROJECTS INCLUDE:

A. IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL ROADS, PARTICULARLY IN BORDER AREAS (SOME OF WHICH ARE ALREADY OF INTEREST TO OTHER DONORS);

B. CONSTRUCTION OF LOW-COST HOUSING, SCHOOLS AND CLINICS TO WHICH REFUGEES, AS WELL AS BATSWANA, WOULD HAVE ACCESS (UNHCR REP IS EXPLORING THIS QUESTION WITH GOB APPROVAL);

C. PROVISION OF BASIS AGRICULTURAL TOOLS AND BORE HOLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EQUIPMENT FOR WELL DIGGING AT EITHER REFUGEE CAMPS OR RURAL VILLAGES;

D. CONSTRUCTION OF 1000-METRIC TON WAREHOUSES FOR STORAGE OF FOOD OR OTHER COMMODITIES.

7. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOB, WE SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT OUR PURPOSE IS TO HELP BOTSWANA DEVELOP RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH EXISTING REFUGEE PROBLEM AND ANY CONTINGENCIES WHICH MIGHT ARISE FROM FUTURE EVENTS IN RHODESIA OR SOUTH AFRICA. WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE CAREFUL TO RESPECT GOB'S CURRENT CAUTIOUS POLICY, PARTICULARLY ITS RELUCTANCE TO CONSIDER PERMANENT, LARGE-SCALE RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, VISIT OF REFUGEE ASSESSMENT TEAM SHOULD PROVIDE US WITH TIMELY OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO HELP BOTSWANA DEVELOP AND PURSUE ITS OWN REFUGEE ASSISTANCE STRATEGY. NORLAND

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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REFUGEE ASSESSMENT
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